

A RARE AND LITTLE-KNOWN PUBLICATION

BY ARTHUR HOLLICK

About sixty years ago a monthly publication was issued under the title "The People's Medical Journal and Home Doctor," edited by Frederick Hollick, M.D., and published by T. W. Strong, 98 Nassau St., New York.

Volume I, Nos. 1-12, includes the period from July, 1853, to June, 1854. Volume II, Nos. 1-6, from July to December, 1854, when it terminated. A complete series is in my possession, and I have never seen, elsewhere, even a single copy of any one of the numbers.

The contents cover rather a wide range of subjects; many statements of fact are curiously at variance with our present knowledge, and much of the diction appears quaint and at times crude, according to our modern ideas of style and expression. Doubtless, however, it was classed as a reliable popular scientific journal at the time of its publication, and it probably reflected, more or less accurately, the popular ideas and scientific conceptions then prevalent on the subjects treated.

Among these subjects are many relating to botany. One series of articles is included under the title "Medical Botany of the United States," illustrated by a number of woodcuts of medicinal plants, with the scientific and popular names under which they were then known. The species figured are *Hepatica Hepatica*, *Hydrastis canadensis*, *Ranunculus acris*, *Coptis trifolia*, *Cimicifuga racemosa*, *Magnolia virginiana*, *Berberis vulgaris*, *Caulophyllum thalictroides*, *Podophyllum peltatum*, *Papaver somniferum*, *Sanguinaria canadensis* and *Eupatorium perfoliatum*. Their recognized and traditional properties and uses are described, and some of the remarks are interesting, when read in the light of what we have learned during the last half century. In connection with *Berberis*, for example, is the statement that "many people suppose that the pollen, or dust of the flowers, will cause *rust* in wheat, but the most careful experiments have proved this notion to be entirely without foundation." The

alleged use by the Indians of so many different plants is commented upon as follows: "We would here ask how it is that the Indians were supposed to have so much experimental knowledge of medicinal plants . . . if they really found out all that is attributed to them they must have been tolerably well afflicted and for a long time. The fact is these "*Indian Remedies*" are, for the most part, gross humbugs, and were never known until the white men compounded them."

Other series of articles are entitled "The Natural History of Perfumes and Flowers," and "Chapters on the Physiology of the Origin of Life." From the latter we learn that "the vegetable kingdom is divided by the philosophical botanist into two great classes, the *cellulares* and the *vasculares*; the former containing the lowest, and therefore the least complicated forms . . . some orders of *algae*, the *Desmidiæ* and *Diatomaceæ*, for example, are equally claimed by the botanist and the zoologist, so uncertain is it to which department of science they truly belong."

In describing the systematic position of plants both the natural and the Linnaean systems of classification are used, as for example: "ANISUM. *Pimpinella anisum*. Anise. Belongs to the natural family *Umbelliferae* and to the Linnaean class and order *Pentandria Digynia*."

"ANTHEMIS. *Anthemis nobilis*. Chamomile. Belongs to the natural family *Compositae* and to the Linnaean class and order *Syngenesia Superflua*."

There are also directions for growing "simples" and how to prepare various lotions, emulsions, salves, tinctures, etc., from them.

In his farewell editorial the editor says that "he finds it utterly impossible, once a month, to prepare the matter for a No. of the Journal . . . he cannot bestow that attention upon his task which it requires, and assistance of the right kind cannot be procured . . . in addition to the above reason, we also find that a monthly issue is liable to many irregularities . . . our subscribers mostly receive their Nos. by post, or rather *should do so* . . . but a large portion of them never reach their destination and have to be sent again, sometimes two or three times over.

The trouble and loss which is thus experienced is incalculable, and only becomes greater as our subscribers increase." From which we infer that the scientific and business trials and tribulations of an editor were similar then to those of today.

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

SHORTER NOTES

Opuntia Tracyi sp. nov.—Low, diffusely much branched, pale green, about 2 dm. high or less. Older joints oblong to linear-oblong, flat, 6–8 cm. long, 1.5–2.5 cm. wide, about 1 cm. thick; young joints scarcely flattened or terete, 1 cm. thick; areoles elevated, 5–10 mm. apart; spines 1–4, acicular, light gray with darker tips, 3.5 cm. long or less; glochides numerous, brownish; corolla pure yellow, 4 cm. broad; ovary 1.5 cm. long, bearing a few triangular acute scales similar to the outermost sepals, which are 2 mm. long; sepals triangular-ovate, 5–15 mm. long, the outer green, the inner yellowish with a green blotch; petals obovate, apiculate, 2–2.5 cm. long; filaments light yellow, 1 cm. long, anthers white.

In sandy soil near the coast, Biloxi, Mississippi, *S. M. Tracy*, May, 1911; flowered at New York Botanical Garden May 12–13, 1911 (33786, type). The plant was collected some years ago by Mr. C. L. Pollard near the same locality (1139) and distributed as *O. Pes-corvi* LeConte, which differs in having larger flowers, longer and wider joints and stouter, dark brown spines.

N. L. BRITTON.

FIELD MEETINGS FOR JULY AND AUGUST

The field committee announce the following field meetings from July 22–August 26 inclusive. The work of the committee would be greatly facilitated if those able and willing to act as guides would send their names to the chairman. Kindly state the days you could serve, whether whole- or half-day trips, and the localities with which you are familiar.

July 22. Wakefield, N. Y. Meet at Grand Central Station, 1:15 P. M. Meet guide, Mr. R. S. Williams, at Wakefield Station.